

LEVEL III

WHOOPING CRANE

The tallest bird in North America at 5 feet, with a wingspan of over 7 feet, is all white except for black wing tips, black legs, and a red crown and cheeks. Sometimes confused with the white pelican, and often travels with sandhill cranes.

Habitat and range: Although not common, these birds nested in North Dakota at one time. Today, there are only about 200 wild birds in the world, and most use North Dakota's large wetlands and adjacent uplands as spring and fall migration habitat.

Why: Listed in 1970 as a federal endangered species. North Dakota provides crucial stopover habitat for the few remaining birds.

PEREGRINE FALCON

Portrait of speed, this falcon will dive for prey at 200 miles an hour, blurring its distinguishing black "mustache" into the adult's gray body.

Habitat and range: Only known nesting pair now resides in Fargo on Community First National Bank building. In 1800s and early 1900s, nested west of Missouri River on sides of tall buttes, but apparently never in great numbers.

Why: Removed in 1999 from federal endangered species list after 29 years, but monitoring continues.

BREWER'S SPARROW

A gray-brown sparrow, unstreaked breast, white eye ring, and a small bill.

Habitat and range: Documented only in extreme southwest North Dakota. Use dense sagebrush within stands of short-grass prairie. Nests are built in sagebrush or small shrubs off the ground.

Why: Have declined nationwide because of loss and fragmentation of sagebrush habitat. North Dakota is on the edge of the sparrow's range, but is important to its survival.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR

Male is gray overall, with a white neck, crescent-shaped black patch on chest, and rufous shoulders. Females are light brown, with a white throat. Sports a conspicuous, inverted black "T" on a white tail.

Habitat and range: West of Missouri River. Prefer arid, short-grass prairie or heavily-grazed mixed-grass prairie.

Why: Population dramatically reduced in North Dakota and no longer occurs in some states. Once were found breeding in most of western North Dakota. Only known breeding location today is in one section of state school land in Bowman County.

SMOOTH SOFTSHELL TURTLE

This "leatherback" sports a smooth, flat, leathery-like shell. Females reach 14 inches in length and males only 7 inches. Strong swimmers that sun themselves near shore, but quickly swim away if disturbed.

Habitat and range: Only records are in the lower Missouri River System south of Bismarck. Will lay 4-33 hard-shelled eggs on sandbars.

Why: Distribution and abundance is unclear. Rumors circulate of fisherman catching leathery turtles in other Missouri River reaches. Unnatural stream flows of Missouri River may negatively affect this species.

FALSE MAP TURTLE

A small, brown-shelled turtle, with conspicuous knobs in the middle of its shell. A yellow spot is found behind the eye. Females may reach 10 inches and males only 5.

Habitat and range: Only records are from lower Missouri River System south of Bismarck. Do not travel far from permanent rivers and streams. Will bask on anything above water, and often nest on sandbars.

Why: Distribution and abundance is unclear, partly because it flees into water long before it can be detected. Unnatural Missouri River flows may negatively affect this species.



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Whooping crane



Craig Bahrle

Peregrine falcon

photo not
available

Brewer's sparrow

photo not
available

McCown's Longspur

photo not
available

Smooth softshell turtle

photo not
available

False map turtle

photo not
available

Northern prairie skink

NORTHERN PRAIRIE SKINK

Light gray-brown, with several dark bands extending the length of its body. Males have reddish-orange on sides of head during breeding season, and juveniles have a blue tail.

Habitat and range: Red River Valley. Use sandy areas, such as sand dunes in grasslands, where they feed on grasshoppers, beetles, crickets, or spiders.

Why: Distribution and abundance is unclear. Threats include destruction and degradation of grassland habitat.

photo not
available

Northern sagebrush lizard

NORTHERN SAGEBRUSH LIZARD

A 4-6-inch, pale-brown lizard, with four longitudinal rows of dark brown spots. Most noticeable are elongated blue patches on each side of its belly.

Habitat and range: Western edge of North Dakota. Sagebrush habitat is a favorite, but also like rocky areas near water.

Why: An imperiled or vulnerable species in surrounding states that was once listed as a federal candidate species. Destruction and degradation of sagebrush habitat is on-going.

photo not
available

Arctic shrew

ARCTIC SHREW

Distinguishable from other shrews by its tri-colored coat. Its back is black, sides brown, and belly gray. Tail is also distinctly colored with a brown top and a paler underside.

Habitat and range: Found along northern third of state and extending down into Red River Valley. Prefer moist, grassy openings in forested areas.

Why: Little is known of its habits and needs. Appears vulnerable in surrounding states, but may be secure in its primary range in Canada.

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available

*Western
small-footed myotis*

WESTERN SMALL-FOOTED MYOTIS

North Dakota's smallest bat, measuring four inches from nose to tail. The hair covering its body is a pale yellowish-brown, with contrasting black ear and wing membranes. A black band, or "mask," of hair runs across both eyes.

Habitat and range: Found only in extreme western North Dakota. Roost alone or in small groups in rock crevices and under tree bark. Normally found in areas with conifer trees.

Why: Once listed as a federal candidate species, little is known about this bat in North Dakota. Loss of roosting and hibernation areas appears to be its greatest threat.

photo not
available

Long-eared myotis

LONG-EARED MYOTIS

Roughly the size of a small sparrow, its fur can range from dark brown to pale yellow. Its most striking feature are large, hairless, black ears that extend well above its head.

Habitat and range: Western North Dakota, it roosts in rock crevices, under railroad bridges, in buildings, and under tree bark.

Why: Once listed as a federal candidate species, little is known of its status in North Dakota. Loss of roosting and hibernation areas appears to be its greatest threat.

photo not
available

Long-legged myotis

LONG-LEGGED MYOTIS

A large western bat, with a wingspan of 10-12 inches. Has short, rounded ears, and dark brown fur that extends along the underside of its wings.

Habitat and range: Western North Dakota, and roosts in trees, rock crevices and cracks along stream banks. Often seen catching insects over open water.

Why: Once listed as a federal candidate species, little is known of its status in North Dakota. Loss of roosting and hibernation areas appears to be its greatest threat.

PLAINS POCKET MOUSE

Highly nocturnal, medium-sized mouse, with large back feet. Its tail, roughly the same length as its body, features a pale black stripe on top. Its fur is a buff gray on top with a lighter underside. A distinct light patch is visible behind each ear.

Habitat and range: Southeastern North Dakota in areas with exposed sand dunes or sandy soils covered with grass. Can also be found feeding in crop fields.

Why: Only a few pockets of habitat exist for this species in the state. Loss of remaining habitat is the greatest concern.

HISPID POCKET MOUSE

A medium-sized mouse, with large back feet, and tail roughly the same length as its body. The fur on its back is a mix of black and tan, with an orange stripe separating it from a white belly.

Habitat and range: Southern North Dakota west of Missouri River in short and mixed-grass prairie areas where it feeds on seeds.

Why: Loss of prairie habitat is the largest concern.

SAGEBRUSH VOLE

This rodent has a gray, bushy coat, small rounded ears and a short tail. Unlike other voles, it is usually found living in small colonies consisting of shallow burrows.

Habitat and Range: Far western North Dakota, it prefers dry areas made up of grass mixed with sagebrush or rabbitbrush.

Why: Relatively rare to North Dakota. Its habitat occurs in a limited range within the state.

EASTERN SPOTTED SKUNK

About the size of a small house cat, it is distinguishable from the more common striped skunk by six white spots running the length of its back and a small white spot between the eyes. The tail of this nocturnal and secretive animal is black with a white tip.

Habitat and Range: Southeastern North Dakota. Inhabit riparian woodlands and more vegetated areas such as along fences. Dens in dark, dry spots found in existing mammal burrows, under buildings, or fallen trees.

Why: Rare in North Dakota, its range covers only a small portion of the state. Little is known of its status here, but thought to be in decline in other states.

GRAY WOLF

Also called timber wolf, the largest member of the canid family is three times larger than a coyote. Generally gray, with a lighter underside, but can vary from white to black.

Habitat and range: Currently not known to breed in the state; most reports come from extreme northeast part of state. These animals most likely come from established populations in northern Minnesota and southern Manitoba.

Why: Once thought of as a menace, the gray wolf was eradicated from the plains in early 1900s. Listed as a federal threatened species, wild populations are found in the northern Great Lakes region, and parts of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

CHESTNUT LAMPREY

Featuring an eel-like body up to 15 inches long. Tan on top, with a white belly and no scales, and one continuous fin on back and belly. Mouth is suction cup-like, with teeth in a circular pattern. May be found attached to another fish.

Habitat and range: Red River and possibly some tributaries in small numbers.

Why: Few records in North Dakota. Probably not common in Red River, may be only a migrant.

photo not
available

Plains pocket mouse

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available

Hispid pocket mouse

photo not
available

Sagebrush vole

photo not
available

Eastern spotted skunk



Gray wolf

USFWS



Chestnut lamprey

Konrad Schmidt

*Silver lamprey***SILVER LAMPREY**

Featuring an eel-like body up to 15 inches long, with gray-brown on back and lighter yellow underneath. One continuous, yellowish fin on back and belly. Disc-shaped mouth, with teeth in a circular pattern. May be found attached to other fish.

Habitat and range: Records confine it to mainstem of Red River. Young possibly found in slack water of smaller tributaries.

Why: Few records in North Dakota. Considered rare in Red River.

*Central stoneroller***CENTRAL STONEROLLER**

Member of minnow family that grows to 8 inches. Body arched in area just behind head. Complete lateral line. Breeding males have small bumps along top of head and back called tubercles. Black bands present on orange dorsal and anal fins.

Habitat and range: Records show a presence in Forest River in northeastern North Dakota. Found in pools and riffles of small, clear streams, with gravel or rubble bottoms.

Why: Rare to North Dakota. Little is known of its status.

*Hornyhead chub***HORNYHEAD CHUB**

Member of minnow family growing up to 10 inches. Olive on top that becomes lighter down the body, with an iridescent stripe along back. Belly is pale yellow. Bright red spot behind eye on males, brassy on females. Males have many small bumps or tubercles on head.

Habitat and range: Documented in Forest River in northeastern North Dakota in what is believed to be the only population in the state. Found in pools and slow runs of clear, small rivers.

Why: Little is known of its status. Water quality degradation is a concern in much of its habitat.

*Pugnose shiner***PUGNOSE SHINER**

Small shiner, only 2 inches in length. Olive on top, with a thin black line that runs along upper back. Sides and belly silvery, with a black outline around edge of scales. Mouth is sharply upturned.

Habitat and range: Documented in both Sheyenne and Forest rivers. Possibly present in other Red River tributaries. Prefers clear water, usually with vegetation.

Why: Unclear whether it still occurs in the state. Sensitivity to increased sedimentation the likely cause of its decline.

*Blacknose shiner***BLACKNOSE SHINER**

Body shape thin, and grows to 3 1/2 inches. Black lateral line running entire length of body, with crescents within. Olive to straw colored on top, with lighter sides and belly.

Habitat and range: Historically found in tributaries of Red River, but now found only in a few pools in Sheyenne River system. Prefers pools with vegetation.

Why: Reduced greatly in range due to land use changes that resulted in habitat loss and degradation.

*Roseyface shiner***ROSEYFACE SHINER**

Slender body, with a sharply-pointed head. Grows up to 3 1/2 inches. Dark on top, with a black streak on top of a silver stripe. Body a bluish sheen. Faint red spot at base of dorsal fin. Breeding males have bright red heads.

Habitat and range: Found in Sheyenne River, also has been collected in Heart River. Found in pools with some current or more swiftly flowing stretches adjacent to pools.

Why: Decline associated with loss of suitable habitat due to land practices.

*Finescale dace***FINESCALE DACE**

Grows to 4 inches in length, featuring a white-silver belly. Gray along top of body, with olive sides above a gold stripe that runs length of body. White-silver belly. Entire body speckled in black.

Habitat and range: Population reduced to Tongue River, a small tributary of Red River. Found in pools and slow moving water.

Why: Rare to North Dakota. Loss of suitable habitat is the greatest concern.

YELLOW BULLHEAD

Skin is brown on top, increasing in yellow toward belly. Has a sharp spine in its back and side fins. Distinguishable from other bullhead species by color of barbels around mouth. Barbels are white or yellow as apposed to black in other bullhead species.

Habitat and range: Recorded in Red and Sheyenne rivers, and possibly present in other tributaries of Red River. Prefers backwater or slow-moving sections of rivers with soft bottoms.

Why: Rare to the state. North Dakota considered on the western edge of its range.



Konrad Schmidt

Yellow bullhead

FLATHEAD CATFISH

Large fish that can grow to 5 feet in length in southern reaches of its range. Smaller in North Dakota. Features a large, flat, broad head. Dark above, with a lighter belly. Lower jaw extends past upper jaw, with barbels along the lower lip. Fin on back and both side fins have a sharp spine.

Habitat and range: Recorded in Missouri River and its tributaries. Found in pools and slower-moving water. Also does well in lakes.

Why: Few flathead catfish have been recorded in North Dakota.



Konrad Schmidt

Flathead catfish

LOGPERCH

A darter family member that grows up to 7 inches in length, has a yellow back, with brown stripes alternating long and short along the back. It also sports two separated fins along its back.

Habitat and range: Red River. Usually found in gravel-rocky areas, but can be located in most habitat types.

Why: North Dakota is on the western edge of its range. An American Fisheries Society species of concern, the logperch has been recorded only a few times in the state.



Konrad Schmidt

Logperch

RIVER DARTER

Grows to 3 inches in length, and is olive in color with a blunt snout. Two separate fins along the back, with the first having a small black spot at the front and large black dot at the back edge.

Habitat and range: Red River. Usually in riffles or swift current areas with a rock bottom.

Why: Appears to occur in low numbers in North Dakota and is declining nationwide.



Konrad Schmidt

River darter

PINK PAPERSHELL

Shell is typically thin and flattened. Up to 4-inch shell is tan or olive green, and pink inside.

Habitat and range: Found in sandy bottom areas of Bois de Sioux River.

Why: Changes in land-use practices in and around river have contributed to its decline. One record in North Dakota.



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Pink papershell

Postscript:

In coming months, Game and Fish will initiate a reporting system for incidental observations of species of conservation priority. This voluntary system will rely on casual observations by individuals. A paper and/or electronic observation form will be available for indicating species of conservation priority observed, and where and when it was observed. This issue would serve as an excellent resource for future observation and reference.

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